

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 997

PS 029 634

TITLE Research Notes, 2000.
INSTITUTION National-Louis Univ., Wheeling, IL. Center for Early Childhood Leadership.
SPONS AGENCY McCormick Tribune Foundation, Chicago, IL.; Illinois State Dept. of Human Services, Springfield. Developmental Disabilities Services.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 6p.; For 1999 issues, see ED 431 561. Published twice a year.
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, 1000 Capitol Drive, Wheeling, IL 60090-7201. Tel: 800-443-5522 (Toll Free); Web site: <http://www.nl.edu/cecl>.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Research Notes; Fall-Win 2000
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrators; Day Care Centers; *Early Childhood Education; Fringe Benefits; Interpersonal Competence; *Leadership; Learning Readiness; Periodicals; *Research and Development; *Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

This document consists of the two 2000 issues of a semiannual newsletter that provides current information and research on leadership and administrative issues in early childhood education. The Fall 2000 issue discusses the use of research to promote sound policy and practice in early care and education, focusing on the implications of research in social and emotional competence, brain development, and adults' understanding of child development for the field of early care and education. The Winter 2000 issue is the second in a series of Research Notes to summarize the findings of the 1999 Illinois Early Childhood Directors' Salary Survey and focuses on employee benefits. Information is provided on the types and number of benefits received, the size of benefits, and benefits in comparison to those of teaching staff. (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
 from the original document.

Research Notes

Fall-Winter 2000

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN
MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Eisenberg

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

PS 029 634

Research Notes

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University

FALL 2000

Using Research to Promote Sound Policy and Practice in Early Care and Education

Over the past decade, there have been significant advances in the neuro, behavioral, and social sciences that have enhanced our understanding of the risk factors that threaten the healthy development of children and the protective factors that help children thrive. Three recently released studies highlight the critical importance of the social and emotional development of young children. Policymakers and practitioners alike can draw on this research to help guide their work on behalf of young children and families.

A Good Beginning

In September 2000, the Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network (FAN) published a report, *A Good Beginning: Sending America's Children to School With the Social and Emotional Competence They Need to Succeed*.¹ This report demonstrated the significant gap between the research on children's social and emotional readiness for school and the intent and focus of most federal programs designed to prepare young children for success in school.

How do children become socially and emotionally ready to learn? They develop social and emotional competence through the relationships they form as infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. In the early years, their primary social and emotional milestone is forming secure attachments with their parents or primary caregivers. Next, they begin to develop self-awareness and self-control. As noted in the report, "children who do not achieve these age-appropriate social and emotional milestones face a far greater risk for early school failure" (p. vii).

The report focused on the gap between research and practice. While the federal government is making significant investments in early care and education, there is a clear need for policy, practice, and research to be more effectively coordinated. Of particular importance is ensuring that the mental health needs of children are seriously considered in the design of early care and education programs.

From Neurons to Neighborhoods

In October 2000, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) published the results of its comprehensive study, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*.² The report stresses that the long-standing debate about the importance of nature versus nurture is overly simplistic and scientifically obsolete. Genetic and environmental influences work together in dynamic ways to over the course of development.

The NAS study found that many children enter kindergarten unprepared to learn because policymakers, practitioners, and parents have focused their attention on cognitive development at the expense of social and emotional development. It stressed that early relationships with one or more loving adults are the key to children's well being and questioned whether current federal policies adequately ensure that this goal is being met.

What Grown-Ups Understand About Child Development

A third study, released in October 2000, polled 3,000 people about their knowledge of child development. *What Grown-Ups Understand About Child Development: A National Benchmark Survey*³ found there are major gaps between what parents believe are effective parenting practices and what child development specialists believe to be appropriate expectations for young children. The report suggests that these gaps in understanding can seriously impact the mental health of young children.

The study looked at adults' beliefs about how young children learn. More than 50% of the respondents thought using flash cards with young children would increase their intellectual ability.

Child development professionals, on the other hand, stress that using flash cards does little to help children develop important concepts about their world. What young children need most are parents and caregivers who talk, play, and read to them rather than try to overload them with facts and information.

Children who do not achieve age-appropriate social and emotional milestones face a far greater risk for early school failure.

More than 60% of grandparents surveyed said that repeatedly picking up a three-month-old crying baby would spoil the baby. In contrast, child development experts encourage this empathic response to a baby's crying as a means of building trust and a secure attachment to caregivers. They note that it is essentially impossible to spoil a baby less than six months of age.

Finally, despite strong evidence to the contrary, 61% of parents of children under seven years of age think spanking is an appropriate regular form of discipline and 25% of parents expect a 3-year-old child to be able to sit still for an hour or more. Child development specialists believe these unrealistic expectations could result in abusive parenting and the impaired physical and emotional health of children.

Implications for Policymakers and Practitioners

These three studies have important implications for policymakers who develop guidelines for funding early childhood programs and for practitioners who administer or work in such programs.

Policymakers need to review all public investments in early care and education to consider whether current policies promote the social and emotional competence of children. Three questions can guide this analysis:

- Do programs address the causal risk factors of early school failure such as problematic relationships with parents, teachers, or peers?
- Do policies support a coordinated and comprehensive system for the delivery of services maximizing the use of mental health resources?
- Do policies ensure a stable, well-trained, and well-compensated workforce able to promote children's optimal social and emotional development?

Administrators of early care and education centers need to reexamine their programs looking through a children's mental health lens and ask the following questions:

- Do the program's policies and procedures, and especially staffing patterns, promote sustained, caring relationships between children and teachers?
- Do teachers and caregivers value how children feel as much as they value how children think?
- Is the importance of children's social and emotional development communicated to parents along with cognitive indicators of school success?

At a time when school readiness is a much heralded national goal, the recent scientific research suggests that the 3 'C's (connecting, caring, and cooperating) are far more important than the 3 'R's in determining school success. Policymakers and practitioners can put this important information to use by refocusing programs in the early years so children can foster strong relationships that enhance confidence, independence, curiosity, motivation, persistence, self-control, cooperation, empathy, and ability to communicate – the building blocks of school and life success.

1. *A Good Beginning: Sending America's Children to School With the Social and Emotional Competence They Need to Succeed*, a monograph prepared by R. Peth-Pierce, based on two papers commissioned by The Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network (FAN), is available on the Web at www.nimh.nih.gov/childhp/fdnconsb.html.
2. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, a report prepared by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, is available on the Web at www.national-academies.org.
3. *What Grown-Ups Understand About Child Development: A National Benchmark Survey*, commissioned by Zero to Three, Civitas, and BRIO Corp., is available on the Web at www.zerotothree.org/2000poll.html.

Funding for the Center for Early Childhood Leadership's Research Notes has been provided by the McCormick Tribune Foundation and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Individuals may photocopy and disseminate freely.

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership

National-Louis University
6310 Capitol Drive
Wheeling, Illinois 60090-7201

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Wheeling, IL
Permit No. 97

Research Notes

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University

WINTER 2000

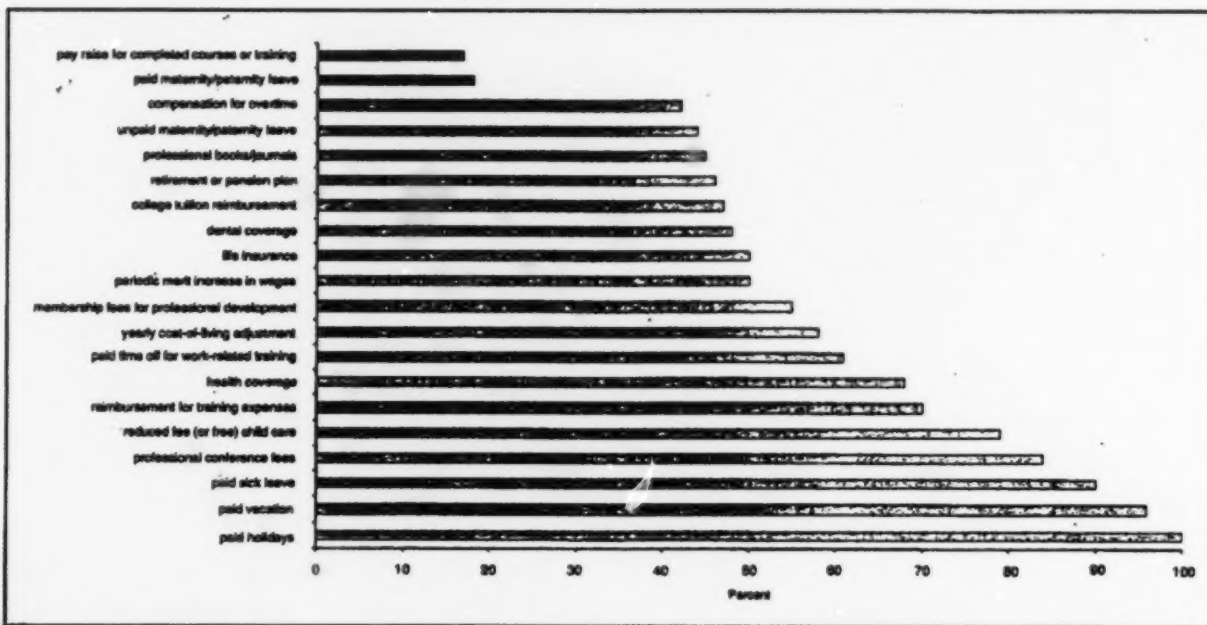
Illinois Directors' Benefits: Baseline Data

This is the second in a series of Research Notes summarizing the findings of the 1999 Illinois Early Childhood Directors' Salary Survey. The data represent responses from 493 directors across the state. The fall 1999 issue provided baseline data on Illinois directors' salaries. This Research Note summarizes the data regarding employee benefits.

Employee Benefits Received by Illinois Directors

Directors were asked to indicate from a list of 20 benefits, those benefits that they receive. As the graph below illustrates, almost all directors receive paid sick leave and paid holidays, while fewer receive health or dental coverage or job-protected maternity/paternity leave. Less than half of all early childhood directors have a pension or retirement plan.

ILLINOIS DIRECTORS' BENEFITS



- The directors who received the greatest number of benefits were three times more likely to work for nonprofit than for-profit organizations.
- Administrators with the Owner/Director title often adjusted their personal benefits to reflect the financial health of their program. As one director said, "I am the owner. I get any benefits I need." Another said, "If there are funds available I receive benefits."
- Professional development benefits (e.g., books, journals, conference fees, membership fees) are often based on "funds available."
- Administrative experience correlated moderately with directors' benefits packages ($r = .27$). The more administrative experience a director had, the more benefits he/she received.

Continued on back page

The Size of Employee Benefits Varies Widely

While the vast majority of directors in Illinois receive paid sick leave (90%), paid vacation time (96%), and paid holidays (100%), the following table shows that the amount of time directors received for each of these categories varied greatly.

Directors' Paid Sick Leave, Vacation, and Holidays

Employee Benefit	M	Range
Paid sick leave	8.69 days	3 - 43 days
Paid vacation	13.37 days	5 - 31 days
Paid holidays	8.40 days	5 - 28 days

Directors Have Better Benefits Than Their Teaching Staff

The data on directors' benefits from this study provide an interesting contrast with those reported for classroom teachers/caregivers.¹

- While the majority of directors in this study (68%) receive health coverage, only 48% of child care workers receive this benefit.
- Directors were also more likely to receive dental coverage (48%) than are child care workers (28%).
- More directors (46%) are offered pensions than are child care workers (31%).

Overall it can be said that while a substantial number of benefits are reaching a slightly higher percentage of child care staff, these benefits appear to be reaching the directors first.

More Work Needs to Be Done

Early childhood educators lament the poor compensation and limited benefits available to them; benefits represent a chief reason why directors and teachers leave their positions each year. Efforts to improve the quality of care for children and families must include proposals to increase compensation and benefits to all workers in the field. Advocates in Illinois stress the need for a comprehensive early childhood professional development system that would include a career lattice rewarding teachers and administrators for advanced training and coursework. Such a system would help to guarantee that salaries and benefits would promote rather than undermine stability in the workforce and achieve improved services to children and families.

"Child care is one of the most challenging professions. Unfortunately, its importance is rarely reflected in financial compensation."

1. Illinois Department of Human Services. (1997). 1997 Report on Illinois Child Care. Springfield, IL: Author.

For more information about research conducted by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, please contact Donna Rafanello, Senior Research Associate, at (800) 443-5522, ext. 5132 or visit our website (www.nl.edu/cecl).

Funding for the Center for Early Childhood Leadership's Research Notes is provided by the McCormick Tribune Foundation and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Individuals may photocopy and disseminate freely.

The Center for Early Childhood Leadership

National-Louis University
1000 Capitol Drive
Wheeling, Illinois 60090-7201

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Wheeling, IL
Permit No. 97